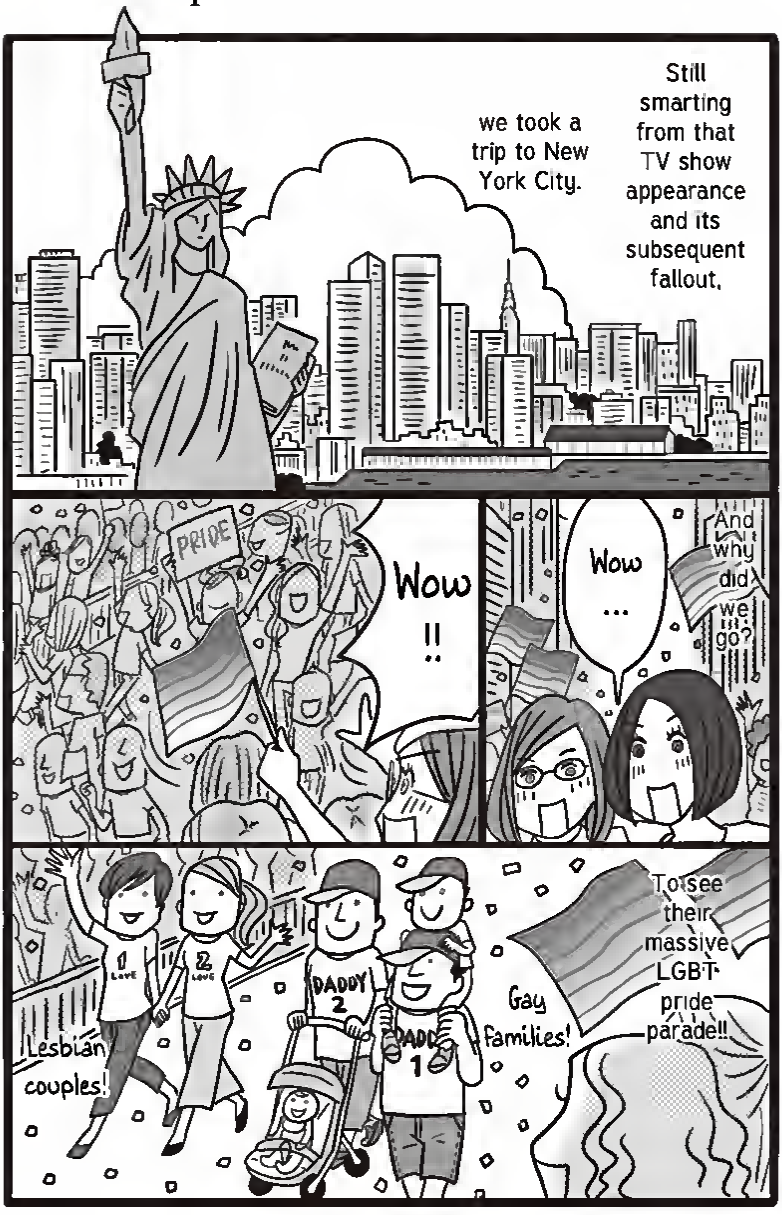
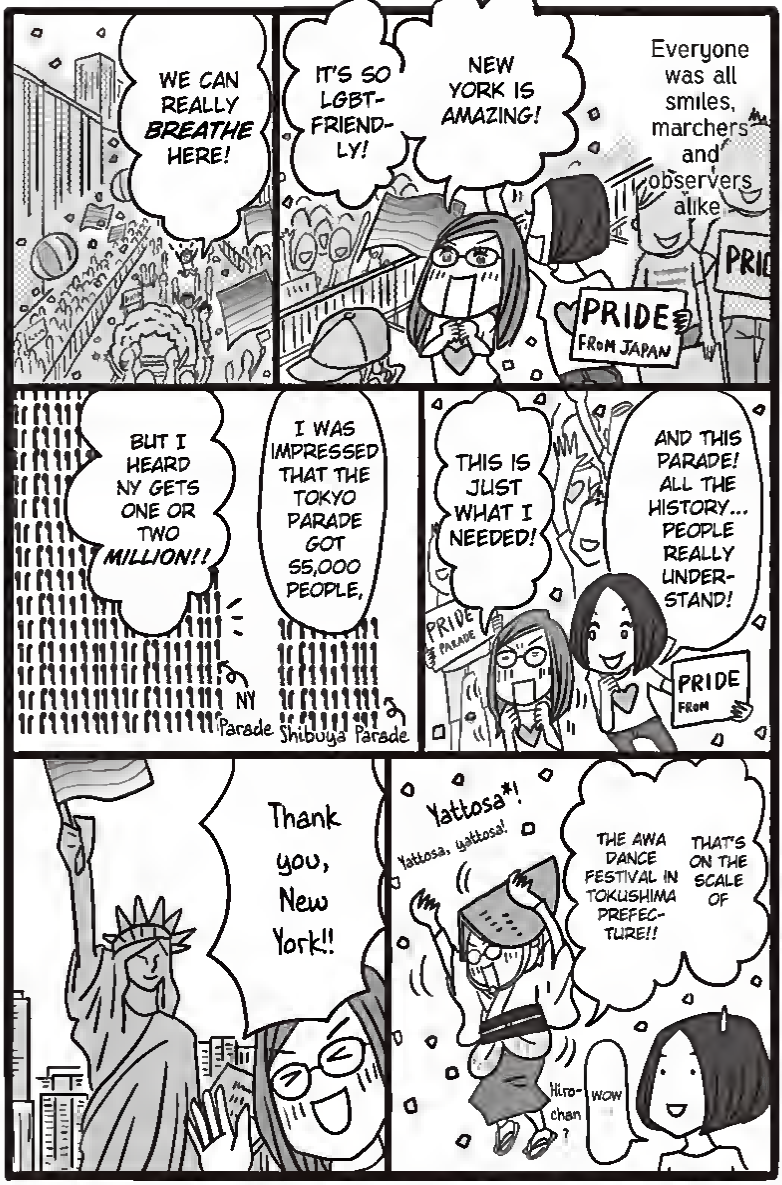
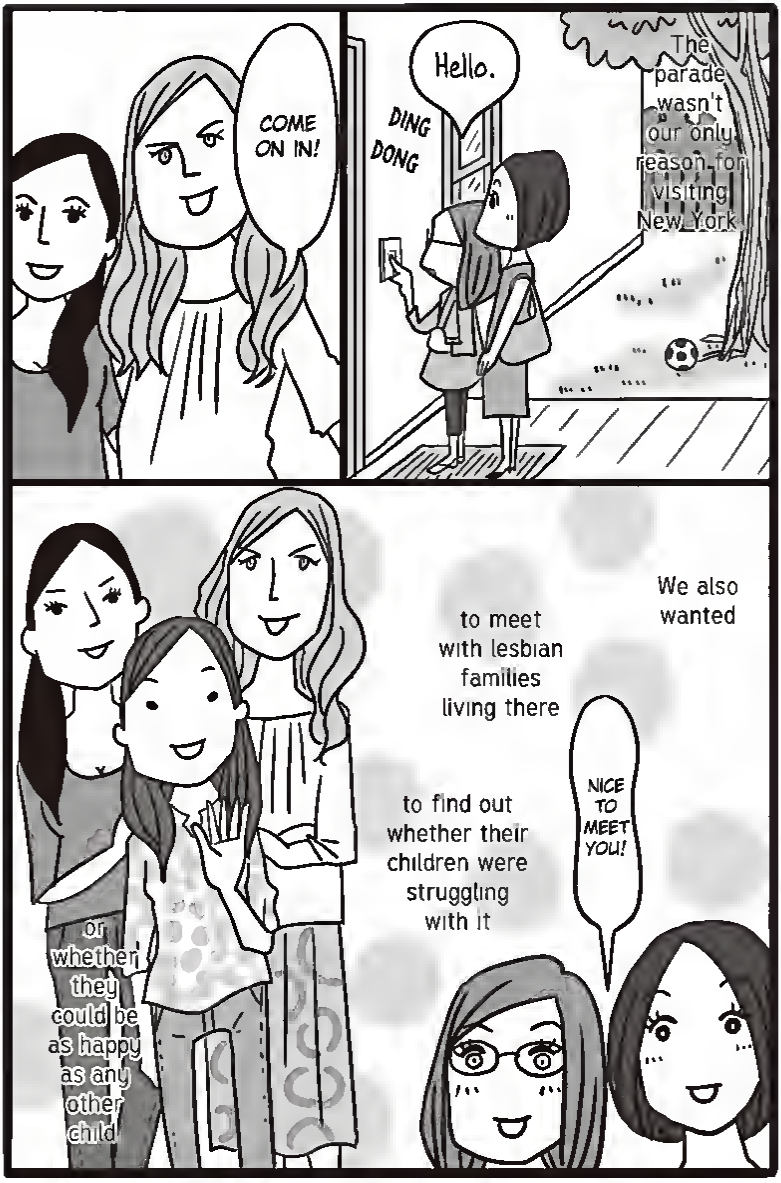
Lililicious~may its fragrance encompass you
lilicious@hanmail.net, http://lililicious.net

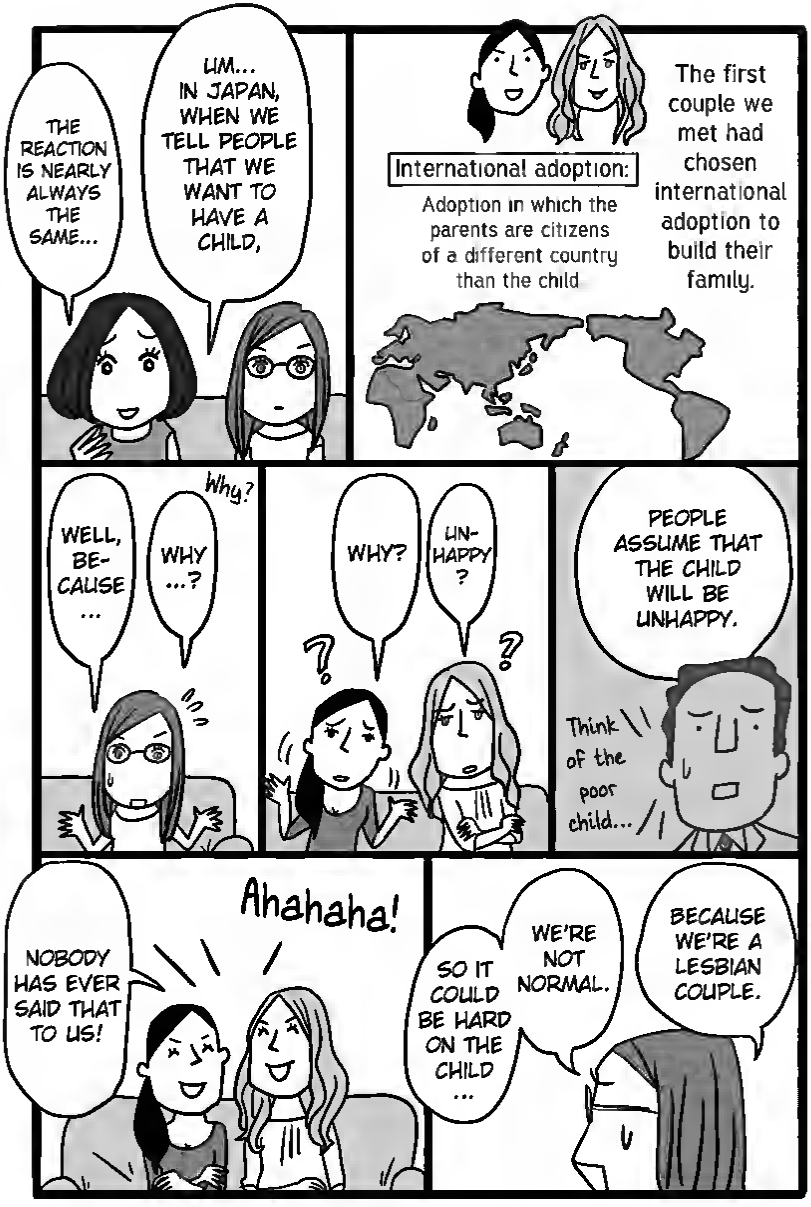
Chapter 10 New York Families



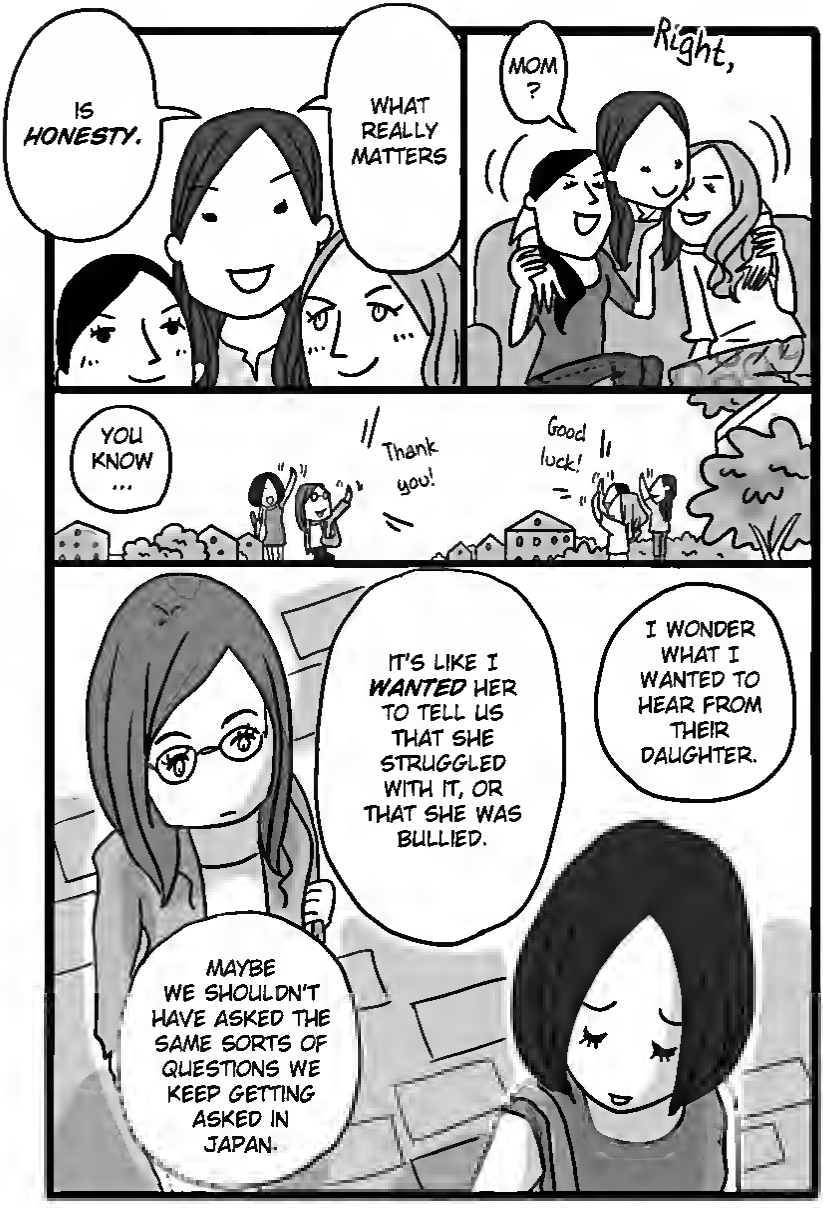

WE CAN REALLY BREATHE HERE!
IT'S SO LGBT-FRIEND-LY!
NEW YORK IS AMAZING!
Everyone was all smiles, marchers and observers alike
PRIDE FROM JAPAN
BUT I HEARD NY GETS ONE OR TWO MILLION!!
I WAS IMPRESSED THAT THE TOKYO PARADE GOT 55,000 PEOPLE,
NY Parade
Shibuya Parade
THIS IS JUST WHAT I NEEDED!
AND THIS PARADE! ALL THE HISTORY... PEOPLE REALLY UNDER-STAND!
PRIDE PARADE
PRIDE FROM
Thank you, New York!!
Yattosa*!
Yattosa, yattosa!
THE AWA DANCE FESTIVAL IN TOKUSHIMA PREFEC-TURE!!
THAT'S ON THE SCALE OF
Hiro-chan ?
WOW

*A cheer/chant from the dance See http://www.glossophilia.org/?p=5867 or http://goinjapanesque.com/11828/ for more info.

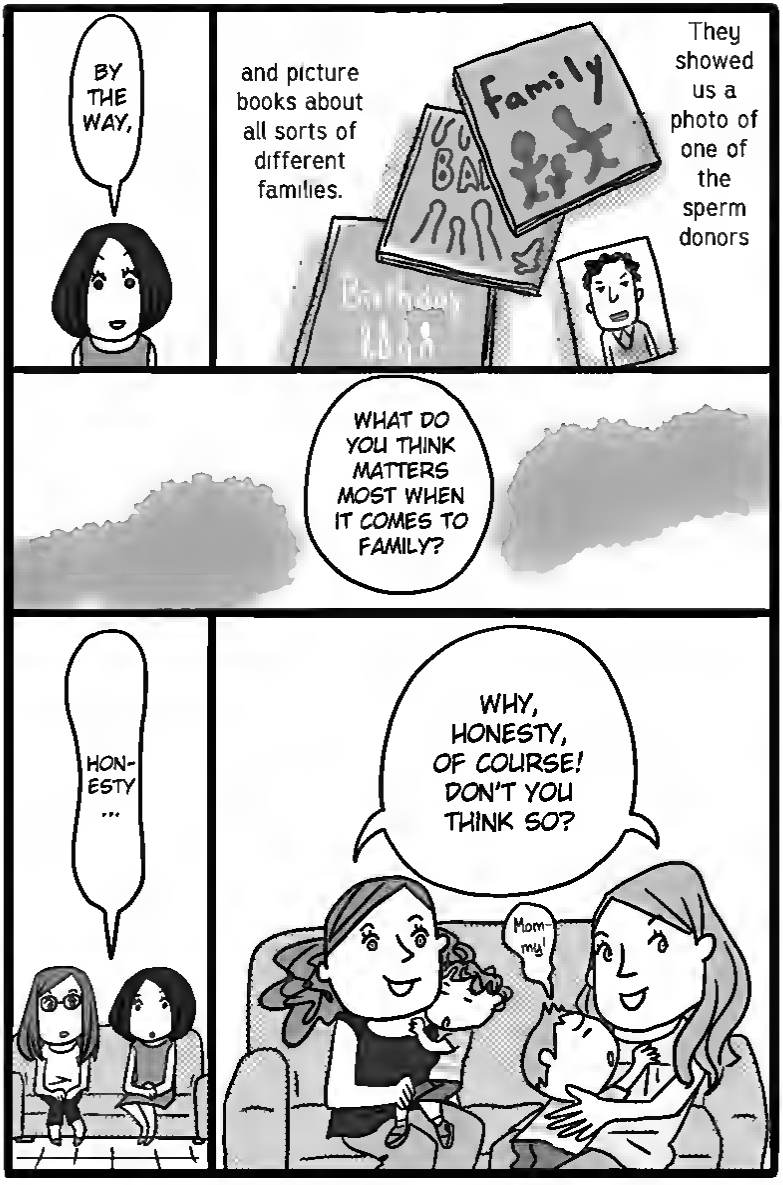

COME ON IN!
Hello.
DING DONG
The parade wasn't our only reason for visiting New York
We also wanted
to meet with lesbian families living there
to find out whether their children were struggling with it
or whether they could be as happy as any other child
NICE TO MEET YOU!

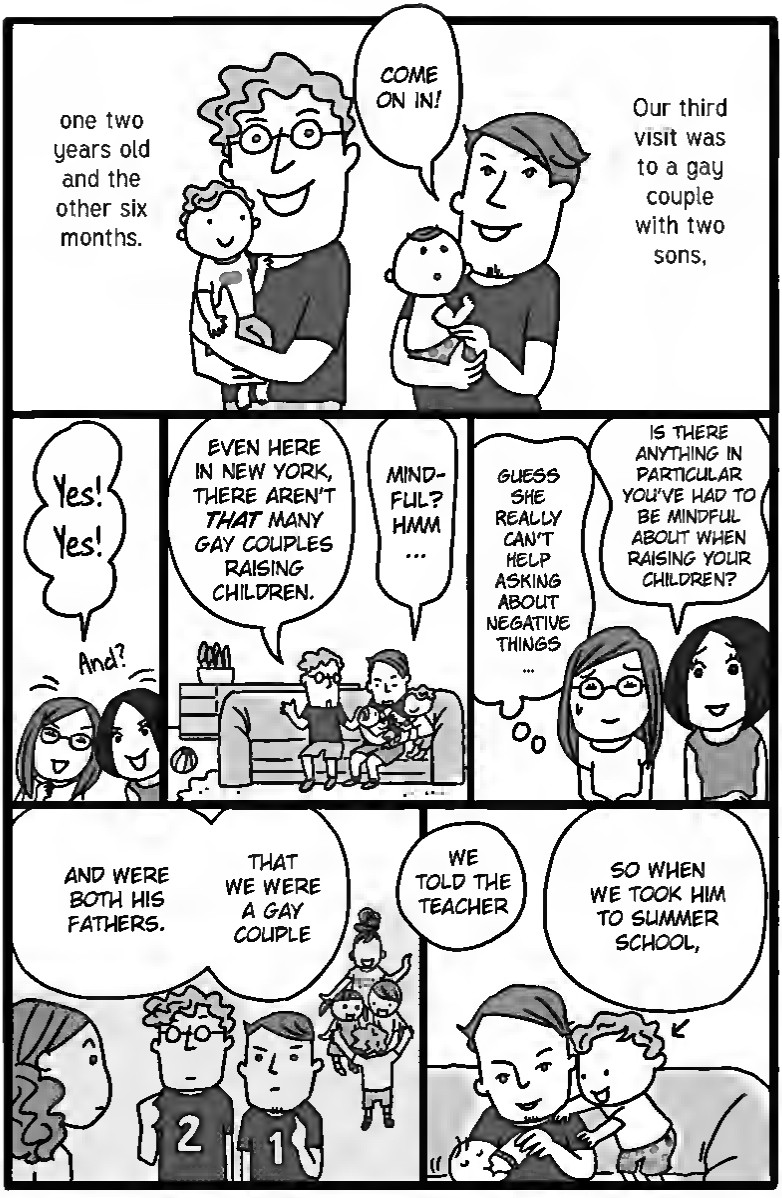

UM... IN JAPAN, WHEN WE TELL PEOPLE THAT WE WANT TO HAVE A CHILD,
THE REACTION IS NEARLY ALWAYS THE SAME...
International adoption:
Adoption in which the parents are citizens of a different country than the child
The first couple we met had chosen international adoption to build their family.
WELL, BE-CAUSE ...
WHY ...?
Why?
WHY?
UN-HAPPY ?
PEOPLE ASSUME THAT THE CHILD WILL BE UNHAPPY.
Think of the poor child...
BECAUSE WE'RE A LESBIAN COUPLE.
WE'RE NOT NORMAL.
SO IT COULD BE HARD ON THE CHILD ...
Ahahaha!
NOBODY HAS EVER SAID THAT TO US!

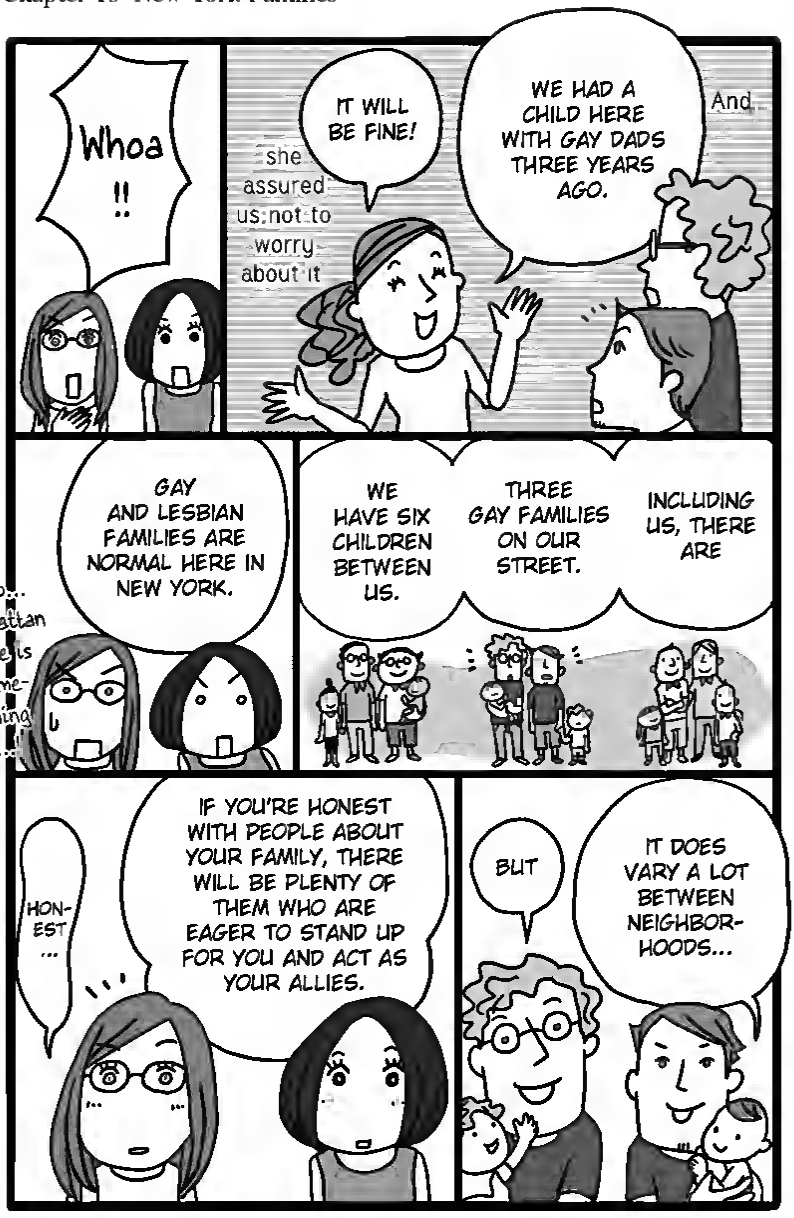
ME?
S-SO, UM... WHAT BOTHERS YOU ABOUT HAVING LESBIAN PARENTS?
I FEEL BAD FOR YOU ...
Wow... New York is so progressive!
Ahaha...
Haha...
THAT'S ALL.
I HAVE TWO MOMS,
Your English is fine, it's the meaning that's confusing.
Huh?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION...
THAT'S NOT WHAT MAKES A FAMILY.
NAH ...
HAS THAT EVER BOTHERED YOU?
W-well...
HOW ABOUT THE FACT THAT YOU'RE NOT GENETICALLY RELATED TO YOUR FAMILY?

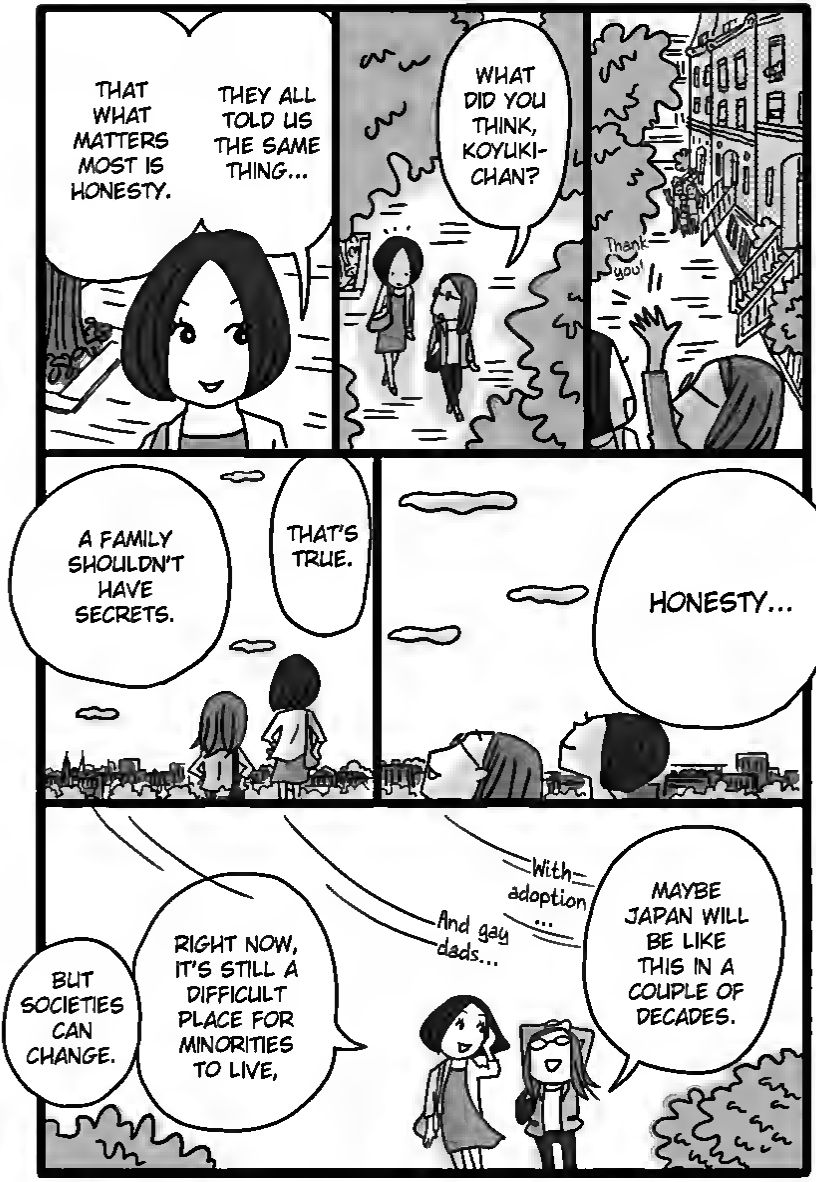

IS HONESTY.
WHAT REALLY MATTERS
MOM?
Right,
YOU KNOW...
Thank you!
Good luck!
IT'S LIKE I WANTED HER TO TELL US THAT SHE STRUGGLED WITH IT, OR THAT SHE WAS BULLIED.
I WONDER WHAT I WANTED TO HEAR FROM THEIR DAUGHTER.
MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T HAVE ASKED THE SAME SORTS OF QUESTIONS WE KEEP GETTING ASKED IN JAPAN.

MOMMIES NEED TO TALK NOW. CAN YOU BE QUIET FOR A LITTLE BIT?
PLAY WITH ME!
HELLO!
The next family we visited was two moms and two kids. Each of the moms had given birth to one of their children.
WITH TWO LITTLE BOYS, THE CLEANING NEVER ENDS!
I swear!
YOUR CHILDREN SEEM TO BE DOING WELL.
Kids!
Okay!
FOR MINE, WE USED A SPERM BANK.
FOR HER PREGNANCY, WE ASKED MY UNCLE TO DONATE SPERM.
Here you go.
SO ...
How did you go about having them?


BY THE WAY,
and picture books about all sorts of different families.
Family
They showed us a photo of one of the sperm donors
WHAT DO YOU THINK MATTERS MOST WHEN IT COMES TO FAMILY?
HON-ESTY ...
WHY, HONESTY, OF COURSE! DON'T YOU THINK SO?
Mom-my!


one two years old and the other six months.
COME ON IN!
Our third visit was to a gay couple with two sons,
Yes! Yes!
And?
EVEN HERE IN NEW YORK, THERE AREN'T THAT MANY GAY COUPLES RAISING CHILDREN.
MIND-FUL? HMM ...
GUESS SHE REALLY CAN'T HELP ASKING ABOUT NEGATIVE THINGS ...
IS THERE ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR YOU'VE HAD TO BE MINDFUL ABOUT WHEN RAISING YOUR CHILDREN?
AND WERE BOTH HIS FATHERS.
THAT WE WERE A GAY COUPLE
2
1
WE TOLD THE TEACHER
SO WHEN WE TOOK HIM TO SUMMER SCHOOL,


Whoa !!
IT WILL BE FINE!
she assured us not to worry about it
WE HAD A CHILD HERE WITH GAY DADS THREE YEARS AGO.
And
GAY AND LESBIAN FAMILIES ARE NORMAL HERE IN NEW YORK.
Wow... Manhattan sure is some-thing ...
WE HAVE SIX CHILDREN BETWEEN US.
THREE GAY FAMILIES ON OUR STREET.
INCLUDING US, THERE ARE
HON-EST ...
IF YOU'RE HONEST WITH PEOPLE ABOUT YOUR FAMILY, THERE WILL BE PLENTY OF THEM WHO ARE EAGER TO STAND UP FOR YOU AND ACT AS YOUR ALLIES.
BUT
IT DOES VARY A LOT BETWEEN NEIGHBOR-HOODS...


THAT WHAT MATTERS MOST IS HONESTY.
THEY ALL TOLD US THE SAME THING...
WHAT DID YOU THINK, KOYUKI-CHAN?
Thank you!
A FAMILY SHOULDN'T HAVE SECRETS.
THAT'S TRUE.
HONESTY...
With adoption...
And gay dads...
MAYBE JAPAN WILL BE LIKE THIS IN A COUPLE OF DECADES.
RIGHT NOW, IT'S STILL A DIFFICULT PLACE FOR MINORITIES TO LIVE,
BUT SOCIETIES CAN CHANGE.

WE'VE GOT A LOT TO DO IF WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A BABY!!
SO, KOYUKI-CHAN...
I'M SO GLAD WE CAME TO NEW YORK !!
Yeah!!
LET'S GO BACK TO JAPAN AND START TRYING TO GET PREG-NANT!!
ROOOOAAAARRRR
FROM NOW ON, OUR KEYWORD WILL BE "HONESTY"!
Because of that trip, we vowed to approach everything with the utmost honesty and to do our best to tackle the obstacles in our path.

If Someone Comes Out to You

"Coming out" is when someone tells you that they are gay, lesbian, etc. In English, "to come out" is also a verb. The expression comes from the American gay community. It came about because American gay people have had to hide their true selves because of oppression. This stifling feeling was akin to being stuck inside a closet, and so the expression "coming out of the closet" was used to describe the act of letting one's true self out and living authentically.

In Japan, things have gradually been improving for LGBT people over the past few years. That said, when we first realize we are LGBT, most of us have the instinctive reaction that we can't tell anyone about it, because we didn't receive many (if any) affirming messages on that front from parents or teachers.

When I see misguided caricatures of gay people in the media that teach people that it's okay to laugh at us, I feel both fury and sadness. Television has a major influence on people.

LGBT children are taunted and bullied with slurs like "homo" and "lez," too. And since they can't really confide in friends or family about it, they usually end up agonizing about it all alone.

Sexuality is an important aspect of the self, so trying to keep your sexuality a secret is emotionally taxing. Gay kids have to pretend to have crushes on the "right" people. And when you're an adult, and a co-worker casually asks you if you have a boyfriend (or girlfriend, in the case of a man), you might tell a white lie. These may seem like small things, but they add up, and the extreme stress of it all can be detrimental to your mental health.

Once you've come to terms with your sexuality, it's only natural that you might feel a desire to share this truth about yourself with your loved ones so you don't have to keep it hidden from them anymore. But despite your desire to come out of the closet, there are so many frightening what-ifs: "What if they don't accept me?" "What if they hate me once they know the truth?" "What if this costs me my job?"

Now, imagine that someone you know has bravely decided to come out to you, the person reading this book, despite all of their fears. Please try to put yourself in their shoes and think about how difficult that must be for them, and what an agonizing decision it might have been. Please tell them that you appreciate them sharing that important information with you. Your gratitude will put them at ease. Then listen to them as they tell you more about it.

The more people we come out to, the more we can live our lives with pride.

I have one more request to make of you. If someone comes out to you, please don't share that information with anyone else unless you get permission first. (This is called "outing" someone.) You may be the first person they've told, and they are bravely putting their trust in you. If necessary, ask "Have you told anyone else about this?"

Coming out is a process, not a one-time event. It can open up a new frontier in your relationship with someone. I believe that accepting someone else's complete self, including their sexuality, isn't a special event, but rather a subtle yet significant shift in your relationship with them.

Japanese Women's Childbearing Period

Our eggs age with us. It seems that many women receiving fertility treatments had been unaware of this fact, and had thought that as long as they hadn't gone through menopause yet, they could still have babies.

Societal norms regarding women's childbearing years might have evolved, but our biological childbearing period has remained the same. Once we hit 35, our chances of getting pregnant rapidly decrease, and our risk of miscarriage increases.

It's believed that the aging of our ova is one cause of this. Before we're born, as we're developing inside of our mother's uterus, our bodies produce a lifetime's supply of primordial follicles (which can later produce ova) in our ovaries: around 2 million. This means that they are a year older than our birth age! Once we're born, our number of primordial follicles never increases, only decreases. As we age, our number of healthy ova decreases as well, reducing the likelihood of successful implantation even after fertilization and increasing the risk of chromosomal abnormalities.

That said, when we're in our twenties, we've only just become adults, and all our energy is going toward work and figuring out how to live independently. In our early thirties, our responsibilities at work are increasing, and our jobs are just starting to get interesting. And the message we get from the media is that our society doesn't exactly make it easy on pregnant women: waiting lists for preschool, single mothers living in poverty, workplace discrimination against pregnant women, and so on. So, before we know it, we're already in our late thirties and haven't had children yet... ...

In Japan, women in their early forties make up the largest group of those undertaking fertility treatments. They don't want to give up on having it all: job, marriage, and kids! They are ready to boldly take on that challenge, but the problem is, their eggs are aging. It will be difficult for them to have children from their own ova.

In the United States, some career women on the West Coast are taking advantage of employee benefit programs to freeze their eggs. And here in Japan, the city of Urayasu will be offering subsidies for freezing ova.

If a woman freezes her ova while she is still young, she can stop the clock on their aging. She can focus on work and life for a while, and leave the question of children to further down the road. A time is coming when that could be the norm.

So, what do *you* think about the social issue of female infertility?

Chapter 10

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